

Court Information Release



United States District Court
Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division
219 South Dearborn Street, Chicago, Illinois 60604

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District Court Hosts “May It Please the Court” Women as Lead Trial Lawyers Symposium
Judges, lawyers lead historic discussion on supporting trial leadership roles for women attorneys

Chicago, Ill. – Today the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois hosted the “May It Please the Court” Symposium featuring five panels, which addressed strategies and best practices to empower women as lead counsel and trial counsel in litigation.

“The court is pleased to host this historic second conference to further the critical discussion on how to create and support greater leadership opportunities for women in the courtroom,” said Chief Judge Rubén Castillo.

“Though the number of women trial leads is still staggering, we are hopeful that this symposium will continue to be a force for change. It was inspiring to hear of real actions general counsels took after participating in our 2016 symposium. The ideas and experiences panelists and participants shared today are certain to create even more opportunities for women as trial leads,” said District Judge Amy St. Eve, Northern District of Illinois, and chair of the symposium’s planning committee.

Speakers and panelists included the following: Honorable Diane Sykes, U.S. Circuit Judge, U.S. Court of Appeals, Seventh Circuit; Honorable Rubén Castillo, Chief Judge, U.S. District Court, Northern District of Illinois; Honorable Thomas M. Durkin, District Judge, U.S. District Court, Northern District of Illinois; Honorable Sara L. Ellis, District Judge, U.S. District Court, Northern District of Illinois; Honorable Rebecca R. Pallmeyer, District Judge, U.S. District Court, Northern District of Illinois; Honorable Amy St. Eve, District Judge, U.S. District Court, Northern District of Illinois; Honorable Shira Scheindlin, Retired District Judge, U.S. District Court, Southern District of New York; Honorable M. David Weisman, Magistrate Judge, U.S. District Court, Northern District of Illinois; Honorable Timothy C. Evans, Chief Judge, Circuit Court of Cook County;

Honorable Celia G. Gamrath, Circuit Judge, Illinois Circuit Court of Cook County, Chancery Division; Honorable Arthur F. Hill, Jr., Supervising Judge, Illinois Circuit Court of Cook County, Criminal Division; Laurel Bellows, Managing Principal, The Bellows Law Group; Stephanie A. Scharf, Partner, Scharf Banks Marmor LLC; Leslie Smith, Partner, Kirkland & Ellis LLP; Colleen Batcheler, Executive Vice President, General Counsel and Corporate Secretary, Conagra Brands; Pearson Bownas, Vice President, Legal, Litigation, Compliance and Regulatory, Abbvie; Dorothy G. Capers, Senior Vice President and General Counsel, National Express; Kristin Coleman, Executive Vice President, Chief Compliance Officer and General Counsel, US Foods Holding Corp.; Ellen L. Farrell, Vice President, Deputy General Counsel, Toyota Motor North America Inc.; Brad Lerman, Senior Vice President, General Counsel and Corporate Secretary, Medtronic; Lori E. Lightfoot, Partner, Mayer Brown; Katrina Carroll, Member, Lite DePalma Greenberg LLC; Megan Cunniff Church, Partner, Molo Lamken LLP; Christina Farley Jackson, Federal Defender Program, Northern District of Illinois; Lindsay Jenkins, Chief, General Crimes Section, U.S. Attorney's Office, Northern District of Illinois; Andrea Roberts Pierson, Partner, Faegre Baker Daniels; Christina M. Egan, Partner, McGuireWoods LLP; Patricia Brown Holmes, Co-Managing Partner, Riley Safer Holmes & Cancila LLP; Eileen M. Letts, Partner, Zuber Lawler & Del Duca LLP; Gil M. Soffer, Managing Partner, KattenMuchinRosenman LLP; and Tina M. Tabacchi, Partner-in-Charge, Jones Day.

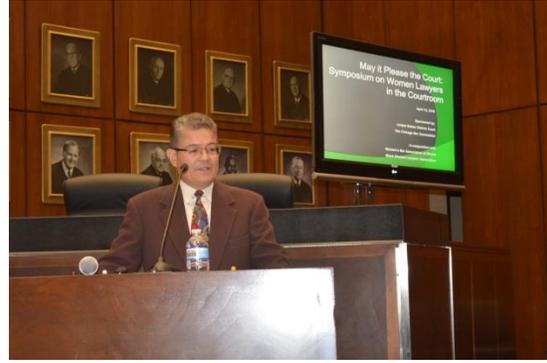
In 2015, attorneys Stephanie Scharf and Roberta Liebenberg released a report "First Chairs at Trial: More Women Need Seats at the Table, A Research Report on the Participation of Women Lawyers as Lead Counsel and Trial Counsel in Litigation," based on a random sample of all cases filed in 2013 in the Northern District of Illinois. The study revealed that women are consistently under-represented in lead counsel positions and in the role of lead trial attorney in all but a few types of cases.

More than 450 attorneys participated in the symposium at the Dirksen U.S. Courthouse in Chicago. The symposium was co-sponsored by the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois and the Chicago Bar Association in conjunction with the Black Women Lawyers' Association and the Women's Bar Association of Illinois. This is the second symposium of its kind that the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois has hosted. The first was in 2016.

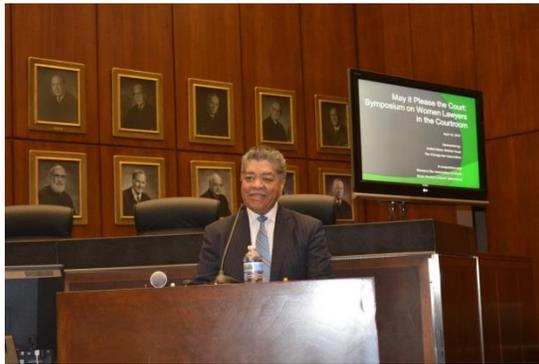
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(Above Left): U.S. District Judge Sharon Johnson Coleman Welcomes Retired U.S. District Judge Shira Scheindlin and Chief Judge of the Circuit Court of Cook County, Timothy Evans



(Above Right): Chief Judge for the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois Rubén Castillo offers welcoming remarks.



(Above Left): Chief Judge of the Circuit Court of Cook County, Timothy Evans.



(Above Right): U.S. Circuit Judge for the U.S. Court of Appeals, Seventh Circuit, Diane Sykes.



(Above Left): Stephanie A. Scharf, Retired U.S. District Judge Shira Scheindlin, and Laurel Bellows.





(Above left): Brad Lerman, Ellen L. Farrell, Kristin Coleman, Dorothy G. Capers, Pearson Bownas, and Colleen Batcheler.



(Above right): Andrea Roberts Pierson, Lindsay Jenkins, Christina Farley Jackson, Megan Cunniff Church, Katrina Carroll, Lori E. Lightfoot.



(Above left): Tina Tabacchi, Gil M. Soffer, Eileen M. Letts, Patricia Brown Holmes, Christina Egan.



(Above right): U.S. District Judge Rebecca R. Pallmeyer, Supervising Judge Arthur F. Hill, Jr., Illinois Circuit Court of Cook County, Criminal Division.



(Above left): Celia G. Gamrath, Circuit Judge, Illinois Circuit Court of Cook County, U.S. District Judge Sara L. Ellis, U.S. District Judge Tom Durkin, U.S. Magistrate Judge M. David Weisman.



(Above right): U.S. District Judge Amy J. St. Eve, Chair of symposium planning committee.